

Celebrating the creative vision of artists working in clay, fiber, glass, metal & wood

JRA QUARTERLY

SUMMER 2016

 James Renwick Alliance



Beth Lipman, *Bancketje*

THE JRA QUARTERLY

EDITOR Johanna Thompson

PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR Miriam Rosenthal

COPY EDITORS Emma Devine, Marilyn Hardis,
Elmerina Parkman

GRAPHIC DESIGNER CSA Studio

PROOFREADERS Barbara Berlin and
Miriam Rosenthal

JAMES RENWICK ALLIANCE

4405 East West Highway, Suite 510

Bethesda, MD 20814

Phone: 301.907.3888

Fax: 301.907.3855

Admin@jra.org

www.jra.org

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Any opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the JRA, its Board of Directors or the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery and its staff.

The JRA Quarterly is published for members of the James Renwick Alliance and is not for sale.

Although efforts have been made to eliminate errors of fact, spelling and grammar, the editor apologizes in advance for any such errors that may remain.

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Cover Photo: Beth Lipman, *Bancketje (Banquet)*, 2003, glass, oak, oil and mixed media, 72 x 240 x 33 inches, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the James Renwick Alliance.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

*"Every New Beginning Comes From Some
Other Beginning's End".*

—Seneca



Dear JRA Members and Friends,

And so, my dear friends, it is time for me to say goodbye to you. After three marvelous years, full of wonder and friendships and excitement, it is time to leave the JRA presidency. I leave this role with the absolute knowledge and full confidence that this tremendous organization will continue to thrive and to grow and to prosper.

We are starting a new era under the sure and capable hands of our incoming president, Jackie Urow. Our parting from SAAM will only empower us to be more creative, more welcoming of other organizations, and surer of our financial well-being. We will be more independent and less tied down to the rigors of a well-intentioned but limiting agreement.

Stay well. Stay involved. Keep learning and traveling and supporting our beloved craft world and craft artists. They need our support. They need our backing.

In the sage words of Nehru: "We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures that we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open."

Find your adventure.

And please don't forget the needy.

I will miss you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Giselle Huberman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Giselle Huberman
JRA President

Giselle's necklace by Reiko Ishiyama



CONTENTS



SPRING CRAFT WEEKEND IN REVIEW

- 4 Caucus Day
- 5 Symposium: Reflections on “A Craft Quartet – Weaving People to Create Communities”
- 6 Photos from the Gala
- 7 Awards Brunch: 2016 Distinguished Educators Honored
- 7 Gala Program Advertisers

JRA NEWS

- 8 ACC Award
- 9 Chrysalis Award
- 10 JRA Fellow Patricia Malarcher
- 11 Distinguished Artists Series: Serritella Workshop
- 11 Distinguished Artists Series: Grade Workshop
- 12 ManneqArt Workshop
- 13 In Memorium: Dick Fryklund, Dirk Jecklin and Nancy Corwin

RENWICK GALLERY NEWS

- 14 Renwick Invitational
- 15 Renwick Permanent Collection Exhibit
- 15 Staff Updates
- 16 What is a Museum’s “Permanent Collection”?

INTERESTING PEOPLE

- 16 Vivian Beer

TRIPS AND TOURS

- 18 Summer and Fall Craft Study Tours

Erik Demaine and Martin Demaine, *Green Balance*, 2011, Mi-Teintes watercolor paper, 15 x 10 x 16 inches, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the artists in honor of the fortieth anniversary of the Renwick Gallery © 2011, Erik and Martin Demaine.

FROM THE EDITOR



This issue of the Quarterly starts with reminiscences of the Spring Craft Weekend held in April. Then it moves on to a consideration of permanent collections held by craft museums both by discussing the upcoming reinstallation of part of the Renwick's own permanent collection (see page 15), and by a broad look at permanent collections in general. For this we are indebted to Marc Grainer whose leadership roles in four craft organizations give him perspective on the topic.

Although the arresting piece on our cover, *Bancketje* by Beth Lipman, will not be part of the initial exhibit, it is here acting as a stand-in for the whole of the Renwick's permanent collection. It is featured both because it is stunningly beautiful, and because it has an interesting acquisition story.

The JRA's Acquisitions Committee considered purchasing *Bancketje* in 2007 at the suggestion of Jane Milosch, who was then the Renwick curator. The Committee was not unanimously in favor of the purchase, reported chair Judy Weisman, largely because many of the individual glass pieces were blown by Lipman's colleagues. But it met the criteria of being a significant piece by a significant artist, and there was no disagreement as to the merits of the piece. It encourages conversation and contemplation in part because of historical references to the Last Supper and Dutch 17th century still lifes *inter alia*, and it certainly has beauty and power. Fortunately for us, it is now a part of the Renwick's permanent collection. ■

Billie Ruth Sudduth, *Fibonacci 5*, 1996, reed splints, 13 x 16 1/2 inches diameter, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Kay Sekimachi and Bob Stockdale and Susan Stewart.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear JRA Members and Friends,

It's been another exciting year at the James Renwick Alliance! We saw the reopening of the much-anticipated Renwick Gallery and the unveiling of the James Renwick Alliance Gallery.

I am so thrilled with all the programming we have been able to provide our members, starting with the Distinguished Artist Series (DAS) where we welcome four wonderful artists — John Grade, Eric Serritella, Sibylle Peretti, and Don Friedlich — to present a workshop and give a lecture. A very special thank you to Rebecca Ravenal and the entire DAS committee for putting together such a wonderful series.

In early April, as part of Spring Craft Weekend, we heard four artists participate in a symposium. (see article page 5). Honored at the Weekend were Michael Monroe and Pat Arnold and our 2016 Distinguished Educators (see article page 7), along with the first recipient of the JRA Chrysalis Award Shea Wilkinson (see article page 9).

The JRA coordinated events with old friends at the American Craft Council and also made new connections with the folks at ManneqArt and Pottery on the Hill. We hope to continue our collaborations with these great organizations to provide interesting programming for members. As always, the JRA has a number of craft-related trips being planned, see the back page for details. JRA trips are always very special and we hope you can participate.

Last winter, the JRA office itself got a little makeover, and we are working on the next phase of updates to our databases and website with the goal of enhancing the user experience for all. I want to take a moment to thank Catarina Castruccio-Prince for all the work she did as Programs Manager. In December, we bid Catarina farewell as she accepted a position at the College of Engineering at the University of Miami. This February, we happily welcomed Emma Devine to the JRA staff. Emma was instrumental in ensuring that Spring Craft Weekend went smoothly and it is great to have her on board.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to Giselle Huberman whose term as JRA President ends on June 30. Giselle has provided unending support and encouragement to me these last three years and she will be greatly missed. THANK YOU, GISELLE!

Thank you all for your continued support of the James Renwick Alliance. It is greatly appreciated. ■

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cicie Sattamilasskorn".

Cicie Sattamilasskorn
JRA Director



Pat Arnold

CAUCUS DAY

TELLING TALES/CRAFTING ADVENTURES

Above: Caucus Day Co-chairs Rebecca Ravenal and Lynn Chadwick with chef Bryan Voltaggio. Below: John Kotelly describing the Ginny Ruffner piece for Caucus Day attendees with Michael Monroe and Lynn Chadwick looking on. Photos by Miriam Rosenthal.



Spring Craft Weekend 2016 kicked off with a gathering of Craft Leaders Caucus for a social hour and luncheon program at Range, the Chevy Chase restaurant of celebrity chef Bryan Voltaggio. The menu designed for the event included a special JRA aperitif and seasonal cuisine.

Michael Monroe, former Curator-in-Charge of the Renwick Gallery, led a discussion of the joys and challenges of curating and displaying a collection of fine craft in an active home – especially when that home is the White House. The stories were funny and insightful. The issues were familiar but the challenges took on a very different scale.

Michael called on John Kotelly to share his stories of *Beauty's Inspiration*, an iconic glass piece by Ginny Ruffner. John talked

about the joys of collecting: developing a love for the artist's work, the pursuit of this piece and the joy of living with it for many years. The Kotellys generously contributed this work for the SCW Live Auction.

Michael took time to provide his curatorial insights on several other works in the Live Auction and Bruce and Leslie Lane spoke of the fun and satisfaction of introducing "traditional" art collectors to their craft collection.

At the end of the meal Chef Voltaggio thanked the group for coming to Range. He modestly wondered why we might want to hear from him. He then shared a few thoughts on craftsmanship and creativity in great food. Asked and answered! ■

SPRING CRAFT WEEKEND SYMPOSIUM



REFLECTIONS ON

“A Craft Quartet – Weaving People to Create Communities”

Diane J. Charnov

On April 2, 2016, moderator Stu Kestenbaum, former director of Haystack Mountain School of Crafts and current strategist for a 5-Craft School Consortium, assembled a panel of renowned artists to discuss innovative approaches to craft and community. The panel included Sonya Clark, Chair of the Craft and Material Studies Department of Virginia Commonwealth University, Alleghany Meadows, studio potter from Colorado, David Keefe, artist and activist with the Combat Paper Veterans Project of New Jersey, and Theresa Secord, traditional Penobscot basket maker.

Sonya Clark eloquently described her work, *Hair Craft*, in which twelve African American hairstylists in Richmond, VA used traditional African American hair braiding techniques to demonstrate expertise transferred from hair to canvas. With a group of 50 volunteers in New York, Sonya unwove the Confederate battle flag as a metaphor for dismantling racism embedded in the fabric of America. Her powerful images underscored the theme that “art work is better when there are more hands touching art.”

Alleghany Meadows, ceramic artist and founder of the *Nomadic Artstream Traveling Gallery*, reinforced the importance of community in art. He described his Artstream as a “large fishing lure” to draw people to the beauty of the “pliable, responsive material” that is clay. As it traverses the country, community is integral as ceramics are loaned in exchange for photographs of pieces used on kitchen tables and in dishwashers. Images of his circular wall pieces of multiple bowls nestled inside each other mirrored the importance he placed on communities in art.

Theresa Secord, executive director of Maine Indian Basketmakers Association, spoke eloquently of her Penobscot community and the legacy that has informed her work. She showcased young people continuing the basketmaking tradition and earning national craft awards. She spoke movingly of the challenges faced, from the emerald ash borer that threatens the ash tree deeply rooted in the culture, to problems engaging younger generations in traditional craft. From local Boys and Girls Clubs’ workshops to Maine Organic Farmers groups, Secord noted opportunities where traditions are passed on. Her talk highlighted the role community plays in creating art and in supporting artists.

David Keefe, Marine Corps veteran turned artist and founder of the *Combat Paper Veterans Project New Jersey*, described how some veterans deal with Traumatic Stress Syndrome by turning uniforms into paper. Instead of uniforms collecting dust under beds, Keefe illustrated the transformation of the uniform and the veteran, when art is the medium by which a story is shared. Keefe noted how “participatory art can embrace the public to engage in art and help bring two communities [veterans and non-veterans] together.”

It was clear that all who came to the Symposium had traveled far in understanding how artists weave people together to create communities during the 90-minute Symposium. ■

Top Photo: The audience at the Symposium. Above inset: Panelists Alleghany Meadows, Theresa Secord, David Keefe, Moderator Stuart Kestenbaum, and panelist Sonya Clark. Photos by Miriam Rosenthal.



THE GALApalooza

Tables awaiting diners at the SCW Gala.

Photos by Miriam Rosenthal.



Glass artist Tim Tate and Distinguished Service Awardee Pat Arnold.



Raeanne Hytone and Bonnie Schwartz, co-chairs of the Gala.



President Giselle Huberman and Ben Huberman.



Sandy Mitchell and Barbara Berlin, co-chairs of the SCW.

AWARDS BRUNCH: 2016 Distinguished Educators Honored

Julianna Mahley



The Distinguished Educators: Paul Sacaridiz for Haystack Mountain, Chungchi Choo, Jamie Bennett and Jean McLaughlin. Photo by Miriam Rosenthal.

The guests attending the Distinguished Educator Awards Brunch, *Innovation and Exploration*, on April 3 came to hear presentations by the four individuals being honored. Each has made significant and innovative contributions in the field of craft education.

Jamie Bennett is an American artist and educator, known for his enameled jewelry, who taught for more than thirty years at State University of New York New Paltz. He showed his own work as well as the work of many of his students. His philosophy is not to push the student in a specific direction but to act as a mentor in trying to find what the students are interested in. He feels that what determines success for a student is talent, luck, and determination. Thus he encourages them on their individual artistic path. Although this may involve dealing with personal or cultural issues, there is always a responsibility to the historical foundation of jewelry.

Professor Chungchi Choo, born in Korea, has taught for more than fifty years, much of it at the University of Iowa. Her own philosophy is to represent two cultures in her specialities of metalsmithing and textiles. She feels her best work is that of her students, which has been on exhibition everywhere in the world but Antarctica. She is clearly devoted and loyal to her students as evidenced by the support of so many guests who came from Iowa for this event.

For the first time one of the Distinguished Educator Awards was given to a concept: an education innovation. Paul Sacaridiz, Director of the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts' Fab Lab in Maine, enlightened us on the innovation of the Fab Lab. Originated under former Director Stuart Kestenbaum with the MIT Center for Bits and Atoms, a Fab Lab is a digital fabrication facility which is staffed with specialists who help students integrate hardware and software and answer the question "What would happen if..." The Fab Lab at Haystack is one of fifteen throughout the world that are networked and represent technology serving artists. The JRA was honored that Stuart Kestenbaum was also at the brunch.

Jean McLaughlin has been the Director of the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina since 1998. Her goal is to encourage people to share what they know with others. The summertime resident program has grown to one that includes 3 year resident artist programs, winter residency, writers' residency, relationships with corporations, community collaboration, many publications and retreats. Although her role is primarily behind the scenes, the institution has grown and extended its exploration and innovation in the craft field as a result of her efforts. There were many guests and supporters of Penland at the Educator Awards Brunch, a sign of their loyalty to this important institution and its Director. ■

GALA PROGRAM ADVERTISERS

The JRA is most grateful to the following people for having purchased ads in the Spring Craft Weekend program. The revenue from these ads will add a significant boost to the amount earned by the Weekend and these proceeds will enable the JRA to carry out its mission. ■



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 Barbara Wolanin



Marian Schoettle. *Housing Crisis*. 2012, Suit and house effigy of commercial house protective wrap. May Day, Occupy, NYC. Photo by the artist.

In February 2016, the JRA presented its second annual award for Innovation in Craft at the Baltimore ACC show to Marian Schoettle for her Conceptual Clothing line. The JRA partnered with ACC to create this award which highlights artists who are using innovative techniques or materials in their work. The award features a \$500 prize, guaranteed entry into the next ACC show, and a special tiny glass Renwick replica made by Tim Tate.

A jury of three JRA members reviewed artists in all media at the ACC show to make their determination. Rebecca Stevens, Pati Young and Michael Janis walked the show, looking for new techniques or materials being used in unexpected, fresh ways.

It can be daunting to walk a show this large, looking closely at so much fine work. There were many wonderful contenders for the award, but the winner became clear when three wilted jurors rounded the corner to the last aisle, practically the last

Rebecca Ravenal

Fiber Artist Receives INNOVATION AWARD



Chris Amundsen, Executive Director of ACC, Pati Young, Michael Janis, Marian Schoettle and Rebecca Ravenal. Photo courtesy of ACC.

booth, and all of them lit up and started buzzing animatedly around this artist's work.

Marian "Mau" Schoettle's "Post Industrial Folk Wear" grabbed the jurors immediately. Her line of Tyvek outerwear elevates an industrial material for craft use, utilizing a non-traditional material in a fresh contemporary way. She employs modern ideals of repurposing, up-cycling and minimalism, creating simple, useful items with a quirky sense of fun.

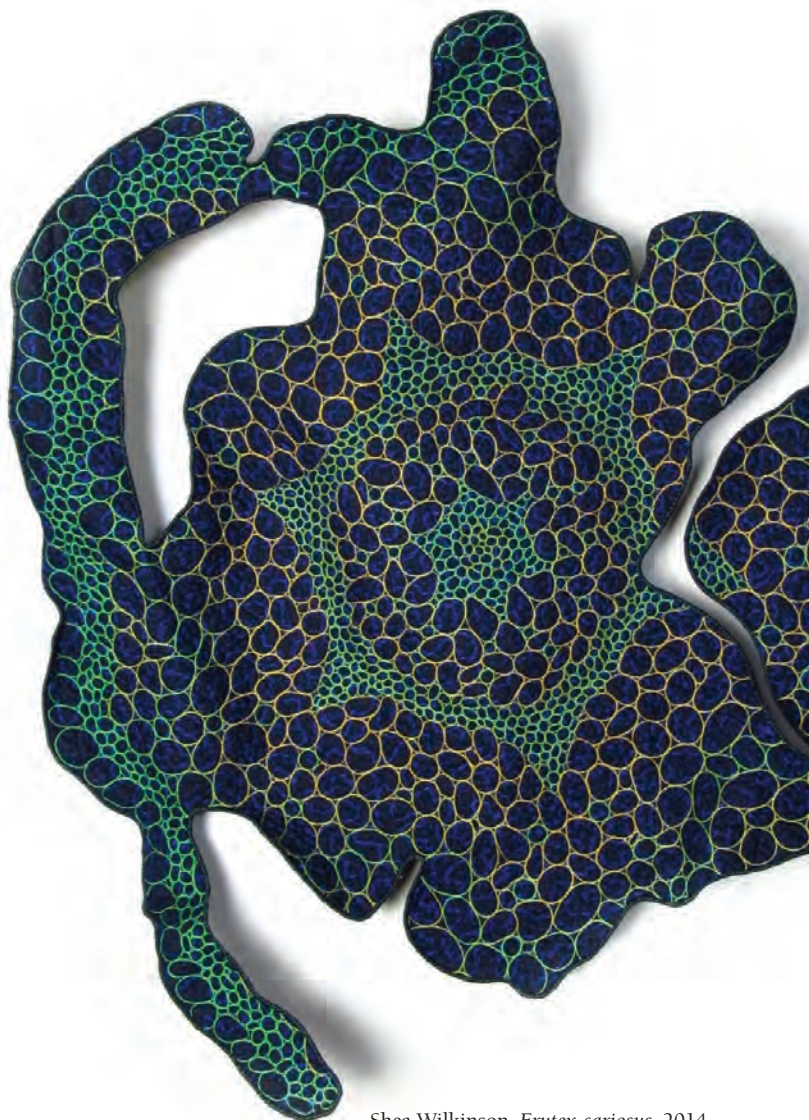
Mau uses industrial and surplus materials such as Tyvek (the impervious material that wraps houses and is used in mailing envelopes), cans of latex paint, sharpie pens, hardware, digital printing, and a reservoir of pattern-making skills to create "accessories for the society on the go." Her clothing is attractive and well-made, her designs cross barriers and are wearable by all ages and genders — truly innovative work. ■

Fiber Artist Shea Wilkinson Wins FIRST CHRYSALIS AWARD

Nikki O'Neal

Congratulations to Nebraska fiber artist Shea Wilkinson, winner of the JRA's inaugural Chrysalis award to an emerging artist! Shea works primarily with free motion quilting, which allows her the capability of not only forming the texture of the piece but also creating the stunning imagery and narrative using a needle and thread. She uses quilting as the anchor for her different bodies of work, from the extraterrestrial to natural worlds, and from the mythical to the scientific. With each change of series, Shea derives stimulation from the subject matter itself, and the discovery of new ways to cover cloth with thread. This allows each fascinating body of work to build from the previous ones.

Shea plans to use this award to continue developing professionally and as an artist. By expanding her network of friendships among artists and galleries in the craft world, she can begin to establish herself among her peers on a national level. Participation in exhibitions and conferences will assist her in eventually gaining gallery representation. She is also interested in making larger scale work, applicable to commissions, which will be facilitated by acquiring a professional level quilting machine. Shea plans to experiment further with new sculptural materials, such as wool felt with its unique properties. ■



Shea Wilkinson. *Frutex-cariosus*. 2014.

Square Inset Below: Shea Wilkinson and Nikki O'Neill at the awards ceremony during Spring Craft Weekend. Photo by Miriam Rosenthal.



Shea Wilkinson. *Puget*. 2015.



Shea Wilkinson. *Navigating a Broken World*. 2015.

Following a Fellow's Trajectory

PATRICIA MALARCHER



Patricia Malacher,
JRA Fellow 1988 – 1989.

Were someone to ask about the influence of a James Renwick Fellowship in American Craft on my career, I would point to two publications. One is the *Surface Design Journal*, which I edited from 1993 through 2011. The other, *Wings of a Ragtag Quest*, is a recently published boxed set of 12 travel journals.

As a Renwick Fellow, I spent most of 1989 poring over texts on contemporary crafts from the 1960s through the 1980s. I wanted to understand what art critics were seeing—and not seeing—in craft art. My career goal was to teach writing to artists.

Tapping the wealth of books and periodicals in the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Library, I found not only affirmation of craft as a creative discipline but also insights into the historical art/craft divide. Access to the Smithsonian's whole museum family expanded my awareness of craft's global presence and its contributions to human development. I left Washington with gratitude to the Smithsonian and hope that my subsequent work might reflect the breadth and depth of my fellowship experience.

A chance to use that experience came with the job at the Surface Design Association's quarterly magazine devoted to textiles. As editor, I could feature cutting edge fiber as contemporary art and in relation to its cultural and historical roots. This allowed me to work with writers and assemble a comprehensive body of writing on a field.

After I left the Journal I worked on a different aspect of textiles. My late friend Nell Sonnemann, an innovative fabric artist and professor of art at Catholic University, had named me the editor of her unfinished book on traditional appliqué. Obsessed with documenting what remained of a "dying art," Nell had traveled to 20 countries on four continents gathering 500 applied fabrics that became the Nell Battle Booker Sonnemann Collection at the Gregg Museum, North Carolina State University. But the book that began as a scholarly tome had become a cluster of memoirs recalling her journeys.

Last fall, after years of piecing together manuscripts and snippets, sorting slides, and digitizing images, plus enlisting the skills of a book designer/publisher, I watched "Wings" go to press. It's now at large in the world and like Nell, finding its own unique paths. ■



Nell Sonnemann. *Transmigration of the Many-Storyed Mansion*.
Applied fabrics, wood support. 102" x 36". Photo by Seth Tice-Lewis.

Distinguished Artists Series 2016

ERIC SERRITELLA WORKSHOP

Rebecca Ravenal



Eric Serritella concentrating on fooling the eye. Photo: Jason Dowdle.

In April 2016, ceramic artist Eric Serritella visited the JRA as part of the Distinguished Artists series. On April 16, he gave a workshop at Bob Dever's studio, demonstrating his unusual techniques for making pots which mimic wood. His lecture on April 17 at the Renwick's Grand Salon gave some insight into his personal aesthetic and artistic background and career.

Eric Serritella and his ceramic artwork are both studies in opposites.

His intricate trompe l'oeil pots could pass for fallen logs and broken branches, but are actually made of clay, artfully altered to resemble wood.

His birch pieces are so realistic, you feel the need to touch them to make sure of the material. Yet each one is infused by the artist with "personality:" tweaks to the form that give it almost human characteristics and draw the observer in.

Eric's work is an interesting combination of multiple skill techniques: hours of shaping, carving and careful glazing, all resulting in something that looks like it grew effortlessly and naturally.

Eric started his professional life in the corporate world, thinking about marketing. He now spends his days working with his hands in clay, engaged with questions of line and form. He studied communications and is engaged in the high-tech hustle that keeps his work constantly exhibited and published in a competitive art world. Yet, he seeks meaningful outdoor experiences and stays absorbed in nature and the quiet contemplation that produces such detailed, exquisite clay pieces.

All of these opposites add up to an immensely successful career. He has produced a body of work which is respected and collected around the world for its mastery. ■

JOHN GRADE WORKSHOP

Diane J. Charnov



John Grade describing something VERY small. Photo: Miriam Rosenthal.

John Grade, whose cast tree installation *Middle Fork*, nearly touches the walls of the Renwick Gallery and the viewers who pass by, touched the minds of dozens who attended his hands-on workshop and those who experienced his lecture as part of the Distinguished Artists Series (DAS) in February.

The workshop was held at the Rockville studio, *Artists and Makers*, a space where JRA members could construct new limbs for *Middle Fork* based on Grade's instructions. Participants selected plaster casts, wood blocks, saws and glue – and bonded with each other as they affixed minute cedar wood pieces to the plaster forms. Grade explained that the new limbs would be added to fit the site-specific installations as the work traveled the country.

Attendees learned how a small hand-written sign posted in the window of a Seattle studio attracted hundreds of participants, many in the technology field, who Grade described as missing tactile work. Together they devoted hundreds of hours during the year to affix over 400,000 pieces of salvaged cedar to the plaster casts of an 80-foot hemlock tree. Grade described how he developed a scale model of the tree in a "circus-like environment, where reporters and drones" documented his efforts to cast the giant hemlock. At 150-years old the tree nearly matches the age of the Renwick building.

On Sunday, DAS Chair Rebecca Ravenal, introduced John Grade in the Renwick's Grand Salon. Throughout his lecture he shed light on the inspiration and process he uses in multiple large-scale works inspired by nature.

Grade described how *Middle Fork* would ultimately be taken to the base of the tree from which it was cast to moss over and disintegrate while the process is captured through time-lapse photography. Grade revels in enlisting nature to play a critical part as artistic collaborator as his pieces were intended to rot, crumble, and disintegrate. Whether eaten by termites, encased in moss, or swallowed by the sea, the audience's appreciation of the grand scale of Grade's works was joined with the awe of the natural disintegration process. ■



Lee Andersen, host instructor, explores some ideas with JRA member Phyllis Kaye.



JRA member Ann Miller taking traditional project in a new direction.

ManneqART Workshop

Pat Arnold

The JRA co-sponsored a workshop with ManneqART at the Lee Andersen Studio in Laurel, Maryland on February 20, 2016. ManneqART is a non-profit arts and education organization that celebrates and promotes *Sculpture on the Human Form*. The workshop was led by Robert Reed, award winning creator of mixed media and fiber sculptures.

The twenty plus participants included JRA members, ManneqART regulars, and members of the community. Ages ranged from nine to eighty plus and experience from professional artists to those attending their first art class. The workshop provided a creative forum for everyone.

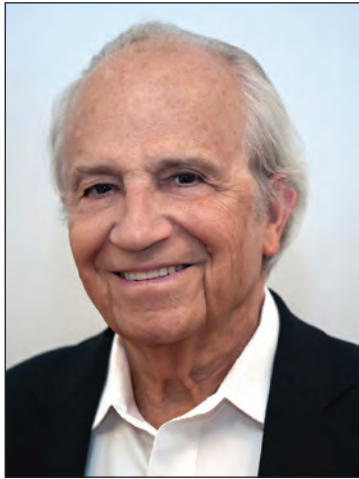
Host Lee Andersen, a wearable art fashion designer, provided basic tools, expected and unexpected materials, use of commercial sewing machines, and access to amazing fiber scraps. Robert gave a brief but motivating talk about inspiring the creative process. Two of his recommendations: browse web images to spark design ideas or combine seemingly incongruous concepts and/or materials to form a theme. Both Robert and Lee coached the participants to set aside their “usual” approaches and experiment with something new. Several participants, who built smaller, bra-based pieces, completed their creations that day while others made significant progress on larger projects. At day’s end the group had the opportunity to photograph their results in the studio

Many thanks to instructor, Robert Reed, to host and coach, Lee Andersen, and to JRA member and workshop participant Ann Miller for contributing a working lunch for the workshop. ■



Olivia Clemons, age 9, showing her wearable art piece made from film paper and gift bags. Photos courtesy ManneqART.

In Memorium



DIRK JECKLIN

JRA members were saddened to learn of the passing of Dirk Jecklin in February.

In 1955 he both received his DDS degree from the University of Iowa College of Dentistry, and married Lois, long time active member of the JRA. Dr. Jecklin served as a dental officer in the U.S. Navy for two years, and was then in private practice in Davenport, Iowa.

In 2004 Dirk and Lois retired to Washington, and launched a second career creating slumped glass pieces. ■



DICK FRYKLUND

We have just learned of the death of Dick Fryklund on May 8. Dick was profiled in the summer 2015 issue of the JRA Quarterly. His long-time friend Brenda Erickson wrote a moving tribute to Dick's fondness for hand craft, part of which follows.

“Those who knew Dick [sensed] the joy he had in watching artists work and learning how they accomplished what they did. We shared a love of craft, and we became friends whose love was not based on objects or material possessions, but [on] a genuine delight in the creativity and possibility that life, art, and community can engender.” ■

Photos by Miriam Rosenthal.



NANCY CORWIN

As this Quarterly was going to press we learned of the death, on May 22, of Nancy Corwin who was one of the two first JRA Fellows, in 1988-89. Nancy's research during her fellowship was “A Critical History of Fiber Art as Part of the Post World War II Crafts Revival in America.” ■

RENWICK INVITATIONAL



Jennifer Trask, *Bresler Vignette*, 2013, found and altered objects including late 18th century carved wood and gilt frame (Italy), white tail deer bones, antlers, python and boa ribs, cow bone, chicken ribs, coyote and fox bacula, Asian water buffalo teeth, camel bones, giraffe femurs, resin, gold leaf, Collection of Fleur Bresler. Photo by Gene Young.

Begun in 2000, the Renwick Invitational is a biennial series of exhibitions designed to highlight outstanding craft artists who are deserving of wider national recognition. The newest incarnation of this series, *Visions and Revisions: Renwick Invitational 2016*, will open on the first floor of the Renwick Gallery on September nine, and will include work by four craft artists: Steven Lee Young, Kristen Morgin, Jennifer Trask and Norwood Viviano. They each take an innovative approach to their medium, and each artist's work will be represented by a range of pieces.

STEVEN YOUNG LEE, a ceramist currently the Resident Artist Director of the Archie Bray Foundation for Ceramic Arts in Helena, MT received an MFA from New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University in 2004. Since then he has lectured and taught in North America and Asia, as well as exhibiting his work at a number of U.S. galleries.

Elements such as form, decoration, color and material that are specific to a particular culture fascinate Steven. He “appropriates” them in his work and allows them to evolve from their original source.

His work is dramatically unique due to allowing chance to collapse his vessels in the kiln. This produces captivating “broken” pieces which simultaneously continue and deviate from their roots.

KRISTEN MORGIN is also a ceramist. Rather than let the kiln distort her work, she decided while in graduate school not to fire her pieces. Fired clay pieces are stable; unfired clay requires maintenance. This “dangerousness” appealed to her — somehow the pieces were more alive because they could disintegrate. They not only look fragile, but are and often need the support of armatures, some of which are partially exposed.

Some of her pieces incorporate old toys and other found objects with her clay pieces, resulting in a sort of diorama of the found objects along side her meticulously accurate copies of them.

Kristen has an MFA from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University in Alfred, New York. She now lives in southern California and was a professor of ceramics for a decade at California State University, Long Beach.

JENNIFER TRASK combines materials such as bone, vertebrae, butterfly wings, resin, metal, antique frame pieces and precious stones to create arresting jewelry and botanical compositions reminiscent of Victorian wonder cabinets. Trasks' lifelong fascination with biology spills over into lavish works that invite us to marvel at the splendor of the natural world. Animal remains — antler, horn, teeth, tusk, and bone — figure prominently in Trask's work, sculpted into large-scale botanical assemblages or striking adornments.

NORWOOD VIVIANO combines traditional training in glass and metal casting, a deep interest in how fluctuations in manufacturing have prompted dramatic changes in urban populations and a discovery that digital technology could expand his creative process. The result is his stunning glass landscapes.

Viviano obtains LiDar scans of a landscape and historical census data, and then may use bronze casting, kiln fusing or glass blowing, and then 3D printing. The result is a handsome cast glass piece that also carries a message about how industry and human migrations are interrelated.

This group of artists was chosen by Nora Atkinson, the Lloyd Herman Curator of Craft; Suzanne Ramljak, curator of exhibitions at the American Federation of Arts and editor at *Metalsmith*; and Anna Walker, the Windgate Foundation Curatorial Fellow for Contemporary Craft at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

The Renwick Invitational series is generously supported by the Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation Endowment. ■

NEW EXHIBIT:

Renwick Permanent Collection

On July 1 a new exhibit of objects from the Renwick's permanent collection will open. This will be particularly gratifying since these pieces have been in storage for at least two and a half years – two years because of the renovation, and more recently because of the WONDER exhibit which occupied the whole Gallery.

But now, the Lloyd Herman Curator of Craft Nora Atkinson has selected about eighty objects from the collection, both iconic and new, to be displayed in an innovative way. Rather than the customary organization by media, or artist, or period, the pieces will be arranged to reflect the way one searches on the internet. That is, Nora wishes museum visitors to be able to flow from one idea to another, fluidly. The relationship between pieces close to each other may not be immediately apparent but might relate to where they were made, a common source of inspiration, technique, or other attribute.

This sampling of the permanent collection is only the beginning. Over time there will be a rotation of some objects being taken off display and others brought on so we can enjoy getting reacquainted with the breadth and depth of the collection.

STAFF UPDATES



Nicholas Bell

Mystic Seaport in Mystic, CT, has announced that **Nicholas Bell** will fill their newly created position of Senior Vice President for Curatorial Affairs beginning June 1, 2016. Nicholas has been a curator at the Renwick Gallery since 2009, and became The Fleur and Charles Bresler Curator-in-Charge when that position was denominated. As curator, he has overseen research, publications, acquisitions and exhibits.

Nicholas organized the reopening exhibition following the Renwick Gallery's two-year renovation. That exhibition, titled WONDER, allowed nine artists to choose a space in the Gallery and create a site specific installation. During his tenure at the Renwick Nicholas has curated six major exhibits and published seven books, including six exhibition catalogs.

In his position at Mystic Seaport, Nicholas will be responsible for the care, management, strategic development, and exhibition of the Museum's collections.

William Morris. *Raft*, 1997, glass with steel stand, 17 x 19 x 10 inches, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Colleen and John Kotelly.



The Renwick's permanent collection of representative fine craft objects was initiated even before its opening as a museum of craft in 1972. In 1969 the National Collection of Fine Arts (NCFA), the predecessor of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, opened a landmark national tour of OBJECTS USA, and acquired nine pieces for its permanent collection. Then in 1970 James Prestini, considered the father of artistic wood turning, contributed nineteen of his pieces to the NCFA. The tradition of augmenting the Renwick's collection was launched, and continues today thanks to the Smithsonian Institution Collections Acquisition Program, various individuals, groups and artists, and the James Renwick Alliance. ■



Elizabeth (Betsy) Broun
Photos by Miriam Rosenthal

Elizabeth "Betsy" Broun has announced that she will retire as the Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) at the end of 2016. In that position she also oversees the Renwick Gallery, a branch of SAAM. It is expected that she will name a successor to Nicholas Bell before she leaves.

Betsy has been at the Museum since 1983. During that time she has managed a major renovation of the Museum building which opened in 2006 as the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture. She also spearheaded the addition of the Lunder Conservation Center which allows the public to view art preservation work by the Museum, and the Luce Foundation Center that is a visible art storage and study center.

In addition, Betsy has guided digital innovation, new educational outreach and efforts to broaden collections in contemporary, folk, self-taught, African American and Latin art because of her belief in the power of art to tell the story of the American experience. ■

INTERESTING PEOPLE: VIVIAN BEER



Vivian Beer at work on the Ellen Degeneres' Design Challenge show. Photo: HGTV.

Furniture maker-designer extraordinaire Vivian Beer was selected to take part in the 2012 exhibit *40 Under 40: Craft Futures* which celebrated the Renwick's fortieth anniversary. The work she presented in that exhibit was so impressive that one piece, *Anchored Candy*, was purchased at

the Spring Craft Weekend auction of 2014. And a second piece, *Slither.walk.fly*, (see back cover) was purchased for the Renwick by a group of seven JRA members.

Vivian's furniture is far from the soft cushy pieces one finds at a furniture store — it is made from stainless steel, concrete and finished with automotive paint! Even the pieces with simple, smooth lines are spectacular and eye catching.

Her solid design base likely comes from the time Vivian spent at Cranbrook Academy of Art where she found a program rooted in the history of the decorative arts. It was there she fell in love with design. And that interest in design shows itself strongly in her furniture.

There is, for example, her Line Abstracts series that includes *Slither.walk.fly*, and *Filled With Birds and Beasts*. Both of these are made up of swooping, intersecting graceful lines that have the feel of calligraphy but which are rooted in nature. The *Filled with Birds and Beasts* bench contains an imagined flying menagerie behind the occupant.

Vivian is justifiably proud that she has been able to keep her solo studio in operation for 10 years, and is convinced that the hardest aspect of her work is maintaining a balance between the business and the art. She has intentionally kept the operation small and overhead low so that she can do a variety of projects, and to maintain a high craft quality in her work.

JRA members are not the only ones that recognize Vivian's special abilities and vision. Recently she was invited to participate in the TV show *Ellen Degeneres Design Challenge*. Vivian found the experience uniquely challenging because of the speed required, and that she must develop someone else's choice of project. Contestants were assigned a carpenter to help them — so under time pressure she also needed to communicate her vision to the carpenter. Use of the Computer Numerical Control (CNC) equipment was a big help in rapidly developing her design ideas on the show.

Even though that designing process was different from her usual pace — on her own, she often spends four or more years thinking about an idea before actually starting work on it — she won the contest! ■

WHAT IS A MUSEUM'S Permanent Collection?

Marc Grainer

What is the definition of a museum's permanent collection?

It consists of all the art objects owned by a museum. Often this collection is divided into three categories:

- Items donated to a museum, but not formally accessioned. This generally consists of art objects that may be sold where the proceeds are typically used to support a museum's collections program;
- A study collection of items that are used for educating the public where such pieces may be touched, photographed, and otherwise handled. An object's technical composition, geographic origin, genre, and other attributes tend to be of more interest than aesthetic issues;
- The formal permanent collection that meets all the criteria for inclusion in the collection.

Criteria for accessioning an art object into a museum's permanent collection typically include:

- Representative of a significant art genre or movement that the museum collects;
- By an important artist whose work represents the above and who has been working for many years in the field

(therefore, this generally excludes beginning artists however good their work is);

- The work has superior aesthetics and technical qualities;
- Item fills a gap in the museum's collection;
- Availability of adequate overhead support (climate control, storage space, conservation resources, etc.);
- Ideally, the item is in good condition and needs limited, if any, conservation work;
- Availability of adequate funds for purchase or an interested donor.

Reasons for having a permanent collection include:

- Supporting scholarship;
- Having material for inclusion in permanent displays, temporary exhibitions, and for loan;
- Preserving, documenting, and acting as a custodian for varying art genres and movements (the trust doctrine). ■

Marc is a past Vice President and present JRA Board member and is a past Chair of the American Craft Council. He has served as Chair of the Museum of Arts and Design Collections Committee, the JRA Acquisitions Committee, and the Founders' Circle of the Mint Museum of Craft + Design Acquisition committees.

American Craft Council presents

PRESENT- TENSE TEEN SEE

ACC Conference
October 13 - 15, 2016
Kaneko
Omaha, Nebraska

Present tense: the form of a verb used to place a situation or event in the current time.

"Present Tense," the 12th national conference of American Craft Council, is a convening whose function is to locate, through the lively exchange of ideas, the place of craft in our time.

Join the ACC for two and a half days of provocative moderated conversations between craft thinkers of different disciplines, generations, and viewpoints - interspersed with opportunities for open dialogue among conference participants.

ACC gratefully acknowledges the support of the **Windgate Charitable Foundation**.

Featured speakers:

Tanya Aguiñiga, *fiber artist*
Sarah Archer, *writer, curator*
Nancy Callan, *glass artist*
Sonya Clark, *department chair, VCU*
Fabio J. Fernández, *director, SAC*
Nicholas Galanin, *artist*
Susie Ganch, *jeweler, sculptor*
Ayumi Horie, *studio potter*
Amos Paul Kennedy, *printmaker*
Jean McLaughlin, *director, Penland*
Tina Oldknow, *glass curator*
Bruce W. Pepich, *director, RAM*
Mark Shapiro, *potter*
Rosanne Somerson, *president, RISD*
Michael Strand, *social-practice potter*
William Warmus, *scholar*
Namita Wiggers, *Critical Craft Forum*

For more information or to register, visit
craftcouncil.org/presenttense



SUMMER AND FALL CRAFT STUDY TOURS

ESCAPE THE SUMMER HEAT ON A COOL CERAMIC ARTS TOUR

July 19-25, WESTERN MONTANA Group maximum: **35**

Tour leader Peter Held has built an itinerary to take advantage of the 65th anniversary of the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts. In addition to private tours of the Bray grounds and historic brickyard and the celebratory Brickyard Bash, Held has arranged visits to numerous Helena and Bozeman artist studios and curator-led talks at museums. This is a wonderful opportunity to experience the beauty and hospitality of Big Sky Country. Register at www.jra.org/events.

BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS — EXPLORE GOLDEN PRAGUE

September 7-14, PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC
(Caucus Members) Group maximum: **18**

Katya and Doug Heller will lead us on an extraordinary tour of the Golden City of Prague, Czech Republic, one of world's most intriguing and culturally rich capitals. Ancient, mysterious and beautiful, Prague, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is an unsurpassed destination and is known for its tradition in antique and contemporary glass.

The Hellers bring in-depth knowledge and unique insights to leading our tour. Heller Gallery in New York City has represented contemporary glass sculpture since 1973. Kayta Heller was born and raised in Prague and takes great pride in sharing the wonders of the city, from its art to the finest of its cuisine.

Their itinerary will introduce us to prominent artists, architects and curators. We will view their work and engage in discussions regarding the historical, esthetic and intellectual roots they draw upon.

If you are interested in signing up for this tour, please contact the JRA office at (301) 907-3888.

INTIMATE ART TOUR, FALL FOLLIAGE, GREAT FOOD, MAJOR EXHIBIT OPENING

October 13-17, HEART OF THE BERKSHIRES
FALL ART EXCURSION Group maximum: **10**

This curated itinerary for ten intrepid craft enthusiasts was offered as part of our Spring Craft Weekend fund-raising. It sold out quickly, but if you would like to be put on the Waiting List, please call the JRA Office at (301) 907-3888. You can find more about all of these trips on our website (www.jra.org).

Vivian Beer, *Slither. walk. fly.* 1977. Steel and automotive paint. 38"x95"x46". Smithsonian American Art Museum. Gift of Leon and Miriam Ellsworth, Brenda Erickson, Jere Gibber and J.G. Harrington, and David and Clemmer Montague in honor of the fortieth anniversary of the Renwick Gallery © 2008 Vivian Beer. Photo by Wexler Gallery, Philadelphia.

